

Battle Mountain District, Tonopah Field Office

Update

Date: June 13, 2015

MINERALS MANAGEMENT

Corvus Gold Nevada North Bullfrog Exploration Project – The Project is located six miles northwest of Beatty. Preliminary results from exploration indicate favorable values and Corvus Gold Nevada has presented conceptual plans for a Mining PoO. Baseline studies in support of this proposed plan are on-going.

Mineral Ridge Gold LLC, Mineral Ridge Gold Mine — Mineral Ridge Gold LLC submitted plans for a modification to their approved PoO for their mine located four miles northwest of Silver Peak. This project has been approved.

Metallic Goldfield Gemfield Project - Metallic Goldfield has completed the majority of the required baseline studies for the proposed open pit mine about 1.5 miles north of Goldfield. A PoO has been accepted for a plan boundary of 1,918 acres and surface disturbance of 1,098 acres. A public scoping meeting for this Project was conducted on January 10, 2014. Chapters One, Two and Three of the EIS are being drafted.

Round Mountain Gold Corp., Plan of Operations Amendment - Round Mountain Gold Corp submitted an amendment to their current authorized PoO for the mines located at Round Mountain to include 40 acres of additional surface disturbance. This project has been approved.

A.U. Mines, Inc. Manhattan Gulch Mine - A.U. Mines, located in Manhattan, submitted an amendment to their current authorized PoO to include two acres of additional surface disturbance. This project has been approved.

Cordex Exploration - Cordex Exploration is proposed to conduct exploration operations approximately 15 miles north of Tonopah on approximately 720 acres, drilling about 300 drill sites. Surface disturbance is estimated to be about 340 acres. This project has been approved.

Kings Valley Minerals LLC — Kings Valley Minerals LLC is proposing to conduct exploration operations for potassium in the Clayton Valley area on approximately 25,440 acres.

There will be 12 drill holes. Surface disturbance is estimated to be about 120 acres. The NEPA kick off meeting is scheduled for June 9, 2015

West Kirkland Mining Inc., Three Hills Mine — West Kirkland Mining Inc. is proposing to conduct mining operations two miles west of Tonopah. Estimated surface disturbance is 492 acres. This project is currently in the NEPA process and is estimated to be completed in approximately six months.

BLM and Nevada Abandoned Mine Program— This project is approved to close 27 abandoned mine shafts around Tonopah.

Nevada Sunrise Gold Corp, Golden Arrow Exploration - The proposal is to explore for recoverable gold deposits by drilling reverse circulation and/or core holes, geophysical mapping, and construction of roads and drill sites five miles south of Tonopah within a 1,473 acre plan boundary. Environmental analysis of the proposal is underway.

Barrick, Bullfrog Mining Project—Barrick proposed a modification to the closure plan for the Bullfrog mining project West of Beatty. To avoid surface expressions of groundwater, Barrick proposed to conduct a partial backfill. It is anticipated the amendment will be processed in 2015

LANDS AND REALTY

Mt. Moriah Cemetery - Nye County submitted a request for a direct land sale of 7.5 acres of public lands including the cemetery located nearby the historic town of Manhattan. The patent was issued in 2014.

Nevada Hospital Association dba Optica - This ROW is a multiple District (Battle Mountain, Carson City, and Las Vegas) funded project consisting of a fiber optic cable overhead and underground to be attached to existing power line poles. The underground portion of the line from Goldfield to Lida has been completed.

Valley Electric Association - A ROW was issued in 2012 and construction north of the town of Beatty has been completed. This project is now providing power and fiber optic for the Department of Defense Nevada Test and Training Range.

Tonopah Solar Energy, LLC Crescent Dunes - The 653 foot tall power tower receiver, mirrors, power generation blocks, and hot and cold storage tanks have been constructed. When completed, the Project will produce 110 megawatts of power. Testing has commenced and it is anticipated that the power plant will be in operation in the summer of 2015. An informational kiosk with picnic tables, and appropriate signage of the project and surrounding public lands, is expected to be constructed in 2015.

Manhattan Road ROW— The office is currently waiting on the SF-299 from the county.

Gold Point—Esmeralda county has shown an interest in the purchase of the town of Gold Point. The TFO is awaiting on the a request from the county.

RANGELAND MANAGEMENT

Magruder Mountain Allotment Water Hauls—The BLM worked with the local permittee to issue a Decision authorizing up to 20 water haul sites.

The Tonopah Conservation District, in cooperation with Tri-County Weed District, has currently treated over 2,000 acres of noxious weeds throughout the District.

The Southern Nye County Conservation District continues to complete Tamarisk control in support of the Amargosa Toad Habitat Conservation Plan Agreement throughout Oasis Valley and within Beatty town proper. In 2014 approximately 50 acres were controlled.

Beatty Springs—Five springs were approved during 2011 and four of the springs will be under construction by the end of the summer of 2015.

Spring /Stream Fencing—Ten sites are being processed for fencing off the source to reestablish and protect flow.

DROUGHT RESPONSE

Since 2012, much of Nevada experienced record drought conditions in which limited forage production occurred and water sources began drying up.

In response to the drought, the BMDO prepared a district drought management plan and analyzed it in an EA. The Finding of No Significant Impact, or FONSI was signed in June 2013. The main purpose of the drought plan was to position the BLM to authorize appropriate drought response actions in a timely manner to prevent resource damage or adverse drought related impacts. The plan consists of a broad suite of drought response actions to address and mitigate livestock and wild horse and burro related impacts during drought.

The BMDO has made drought monitoring and implementing appropriate drought response actions a priority since 2012. Priority areas are: Herd Management Areas, Priority Greater Sage Grouse Habitat, Wetland and Riparian Habitats, and Intact Native Plant Communities.

Monitoring indicated limited forage production across much of the BMDO in 2012 and 2013. In 2014 there was a small increase to limited spring precipitation. Although this moisture led to more forage production in many areas in comparison to 2012 and 2013, drought impacted rangelands still dominated the majority of the BMDO. Hydrologic and vegetative drought have been present since 2012 in much of the District and monitoring indicated conditions are worsening.

The BMDO has worked extensively with permittees to reach appropriate management actions each year by first seeking voluntary adjustments within the terms and conditions of current grazing permits. In limited instances where no voluntary agreement could be reached, or after drought response triggers were exceeded and voluntary movement or removal of livestock was not possible, the BMDO issued decisions temporarily closing grazing allotment or portions of them, to livestock use. Other decisions were issued that implemented agreements with permittees where grazing use occurred outside of the permit terms and conditions.

In 2014, permittees applied for and were approved for over 150,000 AUMs of voluntary non-use during the grazing year. We appreciate all of the collaboration that has occurred between BLM and livestock permittees and leases to proactively address drought conditions.

In 2015, voluntary non-use was achieved on 73 grazing allotments totaling 165,173 AUMs.

To date, seven drought decisions on the following allotments were issued:

- Battle Mountain Complex
- Shannon Station Allotment
- Diamond Springs Allotment
- Grass Valley, Simpson Park, and Dry Creek Allotment
- Roberts Mountain Allotment
- Argenta Allotment (2 Decisions)

Riparian Monitoring has occurred on:

13 Allotments

43 Drought monitoring sites

17 Stream channel Multiple Indicator Monitoring sites

21 Hydro sensors at eight sites

13 Water quality sampling sites, and

29 Water quality samples.

WILD HORSE AND BURRO PROGRAM

The TFO conducted a wild horse gather to remove excess wild horses from the Reveille Allotment in areas within and outside of the Reveille HMA. The court ordered Appropriate Management Level (AML) for the Reveille HMA is 138 wild horses. The estimated population prior to the gather was 168. The gather resulted in the capture of 120 wild horses, with no deaths, injuries or orphans. The TFO staff gave fertility control to 25 mares, and released the mares and 20 studs back to the range. The 45 horses released by BLM and the ungathered population (roughly 48 wild horses) leave the estimated post-gather population of the Reveille HMA at 93 wild horses. The sixty wild horses removed from the range were transported to the BLM facility at Ridgecrest, California for preparation for adoption.

Fifteen young horses were selected at the gather location and transported by BLM to the Tonopah Fairgrounds where BLM corrals were constructed. These horses were prepped for adoption by BLM staff in cooperation with a veterinarian out of Bishop, California. On Friday, November 7, the public viewing day was held with visitors from Tonopah as well as California and Oregon. Thirteen were adopted.

The TFO conducted a wild hours gather to remove excess wild horses from the Little Fish Lake Allotment. One hundred and seven horses were gathered and 140 were shipped to the Ridgcrest holding facility. Seven studs were released back into the Reveille Allotment.

Bootstraps Youth Project

After two weeks of classroom and field training, the Battle Mountain Bootstraps crew, comprised about equally of veterans and new recruits, recently completed its 10th season.

From June through October, the crew, using chainsaws, removed 2,849 acres of encroaching pinyon and juniper trees from carefully selected wildlife habitats (see GIS data on Greater sage grouse page) in central Nevada.

Although the Pinyon-juniper problem is little noticed by the general public, expansion and increasing density of Pinyon-juniper stands are having an adverse impact on wildlife habitats throughout much of the West. Since European settlement, changes in land use, fire frequency and atmospheric carbon dioxide have led to widespread increases in pinyon and juniper at the expense of wildlife. In the Great Basin, for example, the area covered by pinyon and juniper woodlands has increased 10-fold since the late 1800's.

Crews from the Bootstraps program have been removing encroaching pinyon and juniper trees from some of central Nevada's most valuable wildlife habitats since 2005. In that year, the BMDO in partnership with University of Nevada Cooperative Extension, launched the program, which was designed to put out-of-school young adults to work, teaching them useful life and employment skills, while accomplishing much needed wildlife habitat improvement projects. In 2013, the BMDO Bootstarps Program won the U.S. Department of the Interior's Partners in Conservation Award.

RECREATION

Best in the Desert/Vegas to Reno Off Road Race - In what has become an annual event, the District facilitated the longest off road race in the United States in August. Overall, 304 racers from Argentina, Australia, Brazil, Canada, France, Germany, Ireland, Mexico, South Africa, Uruguay and the U.S. lined up to take on the gruelling 535 mile journey from Beatty to Reno, Nevada.

National Public Lands Day -The Tonopah Field Office took the lead this year in celebrating the 21st annual National Public Lands Day in September with two volunteer events in Central Nevada. One was at the Crescent SandDunes Recreation Area in Tonopah, where over 20 adult and youth volunteers helped clean-up the picnic area and remove shooting debris from the Dunes. The second project was held at the Rhyolite Historic Ghost town near Beatty, where a dozen volunteers filled a 40 cubic yard dumpster with illegally dumped litter and trash, joining volunteers across the United States in helping to restore public lands.

Rhyolite Nevada 150 Geocache - In celebration of Nevada's 150th anniversary, the Tonopah Field Office joined BLM Nevada in placing a commemorative geocache between Beatty and Death Valley National Park in the historic ghost town of Rhyolite. The purpose of introducing the BLM Geocaching activity is to engage the public in a fun, educational adventure that celebrates one of the great recreational opportunities Nevada has to offer. The Geocache was activated in October and information on how to find it is posted online at:

<http://www.blm.gov/nv/st/en/prog/recreation/Geocaching.html>, or
www.geocaching.com.

Forestry, Fuels, and Fire Programs

Forestry

269 vegetative (fuelwood) permits sold.

874 tons of biomass utilized, and

Four commercial woodcutting areas established.

Wildland Urban Interface (WUI)

314 acres of mechanical treatment on the Eureka Project,

140 acres of mechanical treatment on the Lida Project,

45 acres of prescribed fire on the Manhattan Project,

2,221 acres of biological treatment on the Austin Project,

1,562 acres of seeding treatment on the Diamond Valley Project,

845 acres of chemical treatment on the Battle Mountain Project,

1,245 acres of seeding treatment on the Battle Mountain Project, and

5,000 acres of WUI projects monitored.

Non-Wildland Urban Interface

200 acres of prescribed fire treatment on the Seven Mile Project,

1,000 acres of mechanical treatment on the Sulphur Springs Project, and

2,000 acres of non-WUI projects monitored .

Rehabilitation

466 acres of the 2013 Goat Peak Fire were aerial seeded in January 2014.

We achieved 100% success in initial attack in Fiscal Year 2014.

Last season, the BMDO had 22 fires that burned 63 acres of public land. Of this total, there were five human caused fires for one-half of an acre and 17 lightning fires for 62.5 acres. We assisted other BLM Districts and agencies within NV, ID, CA, OR and WA with suppression help last year.

Aviation

Our aviation bases stayed busy flying 80,282 gallons of retardant to 28 fires in the BMDO and surrounding areas.

Additionally we managed eight resource flights in support of drought monitoring, wild horse and burro management, and restoration projects for a total of 33 days with flights.